

LOUISVILLE ARENA URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In September, 2006, the Louisville Arena Authority asked the Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) to research, articulate and capture the urban design issues associated with the design and construction of the multi purpose arena to be located in downtown Louisville.

The purpose of this assessment was to provide the Authority and its members with a comprehensive look at the lessons learned from other cities with similar facilities, development of a program of design guidelines, and an opportunity for residents of the City to voice their hopes and expectations to the Authority on this important civic project.

It is the belief of both the Louisville Arena Authority and the Downtown Development Corporation that if concerns about the design of the arena are identified and catalogued prior to the initiation of design, and are shared with and monitored by the selected design team, the arena will be built with a high regard for its urban design considerations and will succeed as a community asset and public institution in a significant way.

Program Activities (October 2006 – December 2006)

- A review of recent comparable downtown arena projects, including site visits to Tulsa, Columbus, and Indianapolis, which focused on urban design and successful integration into their respective environments
- Two days of public forums designed to educate the public on arena design, share best practices, and solicit public input from the community, particularly downtown stakeholders; included over 500 attendees
- Solicitation of additional comments through a dedicated web site and public radio
- Review of urban design issues with the Louisville Downtown Development Review Overlay Committee

- Site assessment analyses by DDC and various City agencies responsible for planning, design, and operational elements involving downtown
- Review of the plans for proposed LG&E facility adjacent to new arena
- Meetings with representatives from the arena's project manager, PC Sports
- Collaboration with urban design firm of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz throughout program and development of recommended urban design guidelines

The Project Site



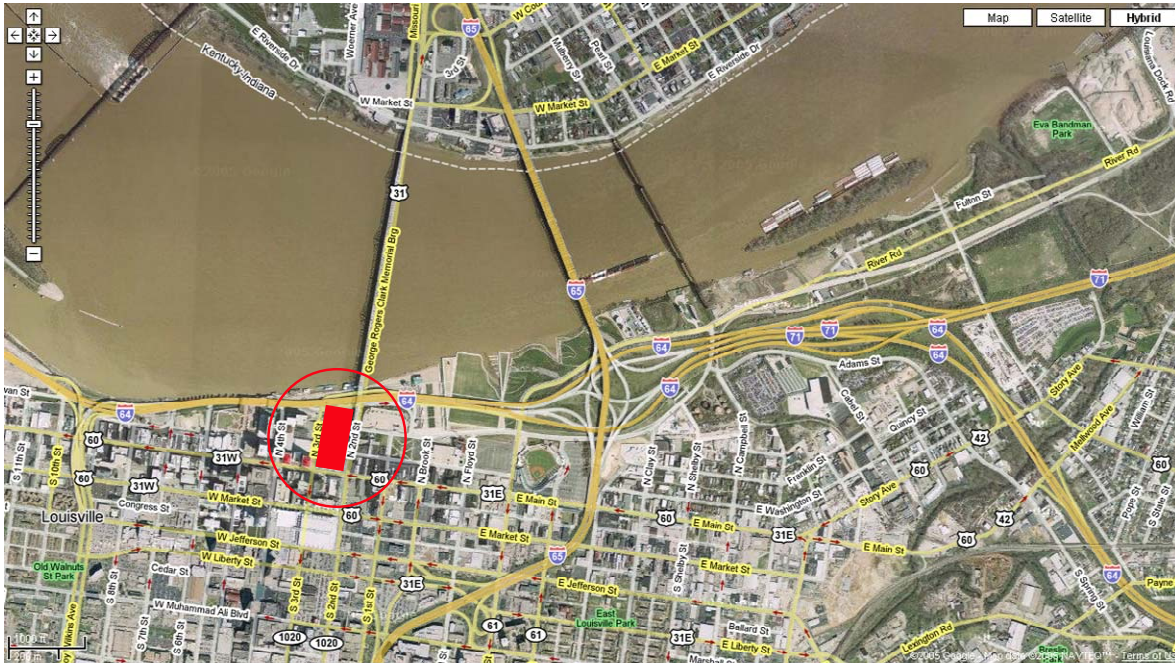
A detailed overview of the site is provided in the full report. Highlights include:

- The site occupies a prime position in the heart of downtown Louisville, with excellent visibility from the Ohio River, its bridges, southern Indiana, and both Interstates I-64 and I-65 as visitors pass through Louisville.
- The site is very close to existing centers of downtown activity and should spawn additional development.
- Demolition is planned for the LG&E power grid facilities and the 120,000 square foot Humana office building currently located on the site.

- While a significant portion the 7.6 acres site is within the Ohio River flood plain, as it rises to the south the Main Street elevation is above flood plain level.
- The current structure of I-64 allows pedestrian and vehicular access to the Riverfront.



PUBLIC FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS: VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY



As part of this program, a two-day public “discussion” of the issues surrounding the urban design of downtown arenas was held on November 16-17, 2006.

Day One - Presentations and a panel discussion entitled **“The Louisville Arena: Turning Large Spaces into *Great Places*.”** The discussion focused on how can the Arena

- Reflect the community’s history, character and aspirations?
- Take full advantage of its site?
- Maintain its vibrancy when it is not hosting an event?
- Best connect to other downtown destinations to leverage all of downtown Louisville’s assets?

Day Two – Four 90-minute free flowing, informal public input sessions led by program facilitators built around three themes:

- How should the arena engage and contribute to its immediate neighbors?
- How should the arena enliven the overall street life and ambiance of the downtown?
- How should the arena, through its form and architectural presence, reflect something unique about the city?

While many comments were individualistic in nature, a surprising degree of similarity and some consensus emerged from the public forums, resulting in a number of common themes:

Arena Character

- The arena should resonate with the overall community, not just with those people that attend games and events inside.
- It should be welcoming to the general public both during events and when no event is occurring.
- It should reference strong Louisville design and architectural character.
- Louisville is a river city; while the Arena will not provide access directly to the river, one should get a sense of the river when one sees it and when inside the building.
- The materials of the building should complement and reference the architecture of Main Street rather than mimic it.
- The arena design should contain strong references to symbols of Louisville and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.
- The building should utilize, highlight, and reinforce Louisville's emerging reputation as a nationally significant architectural glass center of excellence.
- Provide opportunities for public art; become a statewide model for public art.
- Incorporate the arts into the design; Louisville is an arts and cultural city; seek out opportunities to include art references as part of project.

- Consider adding other public uses to keep the building active all day.
- Sustainability should be a goal of this project and any new public process from now on; make this a green building.

Arena Site

- Be pedestrian friendly and sensitive to human scale.
- Provide pedestrian and street level connections.
- Develop a welcoming façade on the floodwalls; avoid blank walls.
- Design plaza and public spaces for everyday use.
- Balance the continuation of the building line along Main Street with the need for a major entry plaza.
- Provide significant exterior retail space.
- Service entrances and access should not disrupt the street level pedestrian feel of the façade.
- Do not allow parking to dominate the arena's design. Provide as little parking as possible on-site. Spread out parking in the blocks surrounding the arena.
- Hide dock and truck access areas.
- Plant trees where feasible.
- Consider cascading fountain or other element of visual interest that reduces the bulk of the River Road façade.
- Highlight Second Street Bridge gateway to the City.
- Include police, EMT, solid waste management officials and others early in the design process to integrate operational needs with design issues.

Arena Context and Connections

- Strengthen the pedestrian connection between the arena and Main Street.
- Encourage pedestrian movement to and from the arena, Fourth Street Live, and Museum Plaza.
- Make a connection between the sports focus of the arena and the arts focus of the West Main Street Cultural District and the East Downtown Gallery District.
- Provide attractive and welcoming pedestrian connections to the River and Waterfront Park.
- Site the hotel and retail uses to support connections between the arena and surrounding areas.
- Use paving, lighting, street furniture, etc. to complement the surrounding districts.
- Take advantage of Witherspoon and Washington Streets.
- Maximize the use of public transit for access; increase trolley service during events.
- Investigate potential for water taxi service from southern Indiana and River Park Place.



LOUISVILLE ARENA URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The previous section summarized the major suggestions that were provided by the public. This section highlights the major urban design guidelines that have been crafted as a result of the entire program (the complete set of guidelines are presented in the full report). These guidelines will serve as a significant reference document for the Authority and its design team, and become a starting point from which their initial design concepts begin to take shape. **It is recognized that not all of the specific recommendations and suggestions will likely be incorporated into the Arena design, nor will it be possible to fully address every concern.** However, it is important that the design team consider these guidelines to be an integral part of their mission.

A. The Arena's Role in its Urban Setting

- The arena's design inspirations should come from the context of Louisville and its surroundings, not only from its interior uses.
- The arena's iconographic power should evoke symbols dear to the City of Louisville and the State of Kentucky.
- The building should be vibrant and accessible whether an event is occurring or not.
- Some parking on-site is certainly desirable, but the Arena should rely as much as possible on area-wide parking facilities.
- Pedestrian and vehicular traffic related to events should be dispersed to minimize congestion.

- Connections between the arena and Fourth Street Live should be enhanced through the arena design.
- Connections between the arena and East and West Main Street should be enhanced, with attention paid to both sports and arts patrons.
- Secondary connections to Washington Street, Witherspoon Street, and River Road should also be considered and encouraged, but not dilute the critical mass of activity and pedestrian flow on East/West Main Streets.

B. The Arena's Presence Along West Main Street

- The West Main Street façade should be attractive, approachable and transparent (revealing the public spaces inside) at its base, while incorporating iconography emblematic of Louisville and Kentucky above.
- Building facade and plaza should together reinforce and energize the West Main Street corridor.
- The plaza should be useable and attract use all year around, not just event days. This suggests use of attractive street amenities such as seating, landscaping and lighting.
- Provide uses inside the building that are active on a daily basis.
- Provide retail spaces on the building's exterior to encourage daily street activity.
- The proposed hotel should be a positive addition to the plaza and should not privatize portions of the plaza for exclusive use.
- Pedestrians should be able to easily approach the plaza all along its West Main Street frontage and from some segment of Second and Third Streets.
- Public art should be incorporated into the project; an artist or public art expertise should be included within the design team.

C. Second & Third Street Considerations

- The Second and Third Street facades deserve special care and ingenuity to insure they are attractive, well detailed, and pedestrian-friendly.
- Large expanses of blank walls must be avoided, particularly at pedestrian scale from ground to approximately fifteen feet in height.
- The necessity of flood protection must not be used as an excuse to produce bland, featureless walls along these two streets.
- Loading and service areas should be screened from view to the extent possible and minimally interfere with pedestrian movement around the Arena.

D. Response to the River & I-64

- River Road is a main pedestrian connection to the river environs and Waterfront Park. The Arena's lower façade along River Road should be designed so that the pedestrian experience is enhanced.
- Similar to the Second and Third Street facades, the necessity of flood protection along River Road cannot produce a bland, featureless wall at its lower levels.
- While the lower portion of the River Road façade must focus on a pedestrian scale, the symbolic aspects of the arena should be best expressed at the upper portion, viewed from the Interstates, bridges, and southern Indiana.
- A large-scale upper level window or similar transparent feature offering a sweeping panorama of the Ohio River should be included.
- An exit should be provided to enable attendees to exit via River Road and encourage movement towards the river and Waterfront Park following events.

E. Massing, Materials & Skyline Silhouette

- The arena should be an innovatively designed, striking new landmark for Louisville, while at the same time insuring it stands the test of time.
- The Arena's major exterior materials should portray a sensitive response to its surrounding context; not a repetition of the same materials.
- The arena's symbolic references should evoke the City of Louisville and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.
- The height of the Arena will mean that it will be visible from substantial distances. Its lower portions should respond to the scale of the pedestrian and historic context, with its upper portions more expressive and imaginative.
- The roof of the Arena will be visible from many nearby skyscrapers and should be designed with this in mind.

F. Additional Design Considerations

- The Louisville Arena should establish a benchmark for green and sustainable design for public buildings of its type.
- In addition to its sustainability goals, energy efficiency and environmentally creative ways to reduce annual operating costs should be priorities.
- Access to public transportation should be maximized as part of the overall site plan.
- A significant landscape and streetscape budget must be maintained for deployment all around the Arena, not just for its plaza.
- The building's signage, color palette and symbolic components should carefully integrate the dual requirements of its lead tenant, the University of Louisville, and of its role as a public, multi-purpose facility.
- Management, crowd control, servicing, waste management and safety considerations are significant issues and should be considered in the design of the building early in the process.